These allegations referred to commission being paid and involvement of the officer's family in private firms. On examination of the Committee's recommendations, it was decided that the allegation which could not be extablished from a persual of the files would be specifically referred to the CBI.

Accordingly, on 2.7.1998, the CBI was requested by the Ministry of Defence to specially enquiry into the following two issues:—

(a) whether commissions are being paid to certain private companies in the matter of Naval procurement, and

(b) whether the officer or any of his family member has any interest of any nature in any of the specified firms with whom Navy has been dealing.

The CBI has since furnished its report, which is under examination.

The officer has filed a Writ Petition before the Delhi High Court and the case is listed for hearing on 27.4.2000.

Defence Budget

†605. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the news item captioned "Bharat ka raksha Khorch atyadhik kam: Amertica published in Dainik Jagaran dated 2nd February, 2000;

(b) the amount earmarked towards defence expenditure in the General Budget for the year 1998-99;

(c) whether India propose to increase its defence budget keeping in view the bitter relations with Pakistan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In 1998-99 (RE), a provision of Rs.41,200 crores was made for Defence Expenditure.

(c) and (d) The allocation to the Defence Services is made keeping in view their obligatory charges, essential maintenance needs, committed liabilities, on going schemes/programmes and prioritised new schemes.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Successive Finance Ministers have assured that additional funds would be provided during the currency of the Financial Year, whenever needed. The allocation was enhanced to 45,694 crores in BE 1999-2000 which was further augmented by Rs. 3243.33 crores through a Supplementary voted in December 1999.

Shortage of Pilots in IAF

606. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the IAF's frontline squadrons based at Jodhpur are short of their sanctioned strength of pilots resulting in severe impact on the flight safety records;

(b) if so, what is the existing shortage of pilots as against the sanctioned strength stating the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to meet the shortage in the pilots strength?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) There is no shortage of pilots in the frontline squadrons based in Jodhpur or any other frontline base.

(b) In view of (a) above, does not rise.

(c) Sustained publicity efforts are on to attract talented youth in officers cadre in Indian Air Force.

Assistance provided to Defence Personnel

†607. SHRI MANOHAR KANT DHYANI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to Refer to answer to Unstarred Question 793 given in Rajya Sabha on the 8th December, 1999 and state:

(a) the details regarding the assistance provided by the Central Government to 524 defence personnel who were killed, together with the details of contribution of assistance made by each State separately in this regard;

(b) whether the eligible persons have since received the requisite assistance, as announced; and

(c) the measures taken for the rehabilitation of 1363 defence personnel who were injured ?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.